

REORIENTATION AND VITALISATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN A KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY IN NIGERIA: CONSTRAINTS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

In response to world-wide debates intensified on the re-orientation and vitalization of education with a view to preparing young people for today in order to meet foreseeable demands in the knowledge society necessitates a study on re-orientation and vitalization of teacher education in a knowledge economy with a view to providing solution to the problems of teacher education in a knowledge economy. Teachers are key actors in the education process and every meaningful reforms of education should always pay due attention to the teacher factor. Teacher education is a program that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. In this era of knowledge society knowledge is increasingly becoming more recognized as the key driver of productivity and economic growth, given rise to what is now referred to as knowledge-based economy, the key variable that determines how fast nations outgrow others is the speed of accumulation of human capital. Consequently, countries with the most highly educated citizens are also the wealthiest in the world, and they are the ones dominating the global market in a knowledge-based society. Part of the constraints is that only quality education can trigger knowledge economy. This necessarily means that the prosperity of nations depends on their ability to generate and apply innovative ideas. The major implication is that Faculties of Education, especially needs to redefine their goals through effective knowledge management to produce intellectually competent graduate teachers. Part of the recommendations stated that greater attention should be paid to research and development of teacher education, while Information Technology (IT) compliance must be mandated in teacher preparation. Also Ministry of Education must ensure regular continuous development of teachers, this means that teachers must be regularly placed on seminars, conferences and workshops in order to develop their competencies in the area of knowledge creation, preservation, distribution and utilisation.

Keywords: Teacher education, knowledge, Economy, Reorientation, Vitalisation.

Introduction

Traditional education in Nigeria has generally focused on developing worthwhile citizens who will contribute to a better society and a better future for all. In recent time, scholars have concentrated on how education can become a tool for economic development. However, a sound program of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education. Investment in teacher education can yield very rich dividends because the financial resources required are small when measures against the resulting improvements in the education of millions. This necessarily makes the teacher to perceive that the course in teacher education would help him minimize his trouble, and to appreciate that it would save the children from much of the painful process through which he himself has passed. Teacher education is needed for developing a purpose and formation of a positive attitude for the profession simply because teachers are key actors

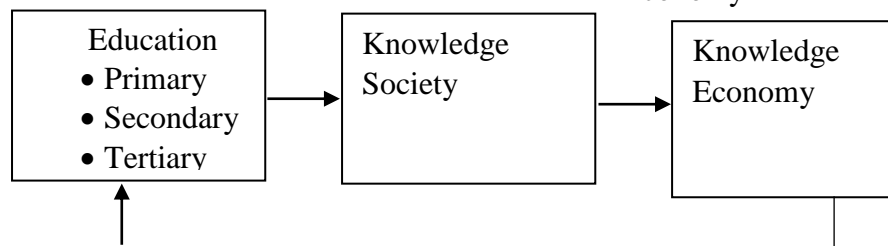
in the education process and every meaningful reform of education should always pay due attention to the teacher factor.

Importantly, we must demand that our schools increase not only in quantity but also in quality, for there is need for us to recognize that nuclear age problems cannot be solved with horse and buggy learning. The 3R's of our school system must be supported by the 3T, that is teachers who are superior, techniques of instruction that are modern and thinking about education for knowledge economy which place it first in all our plans and hopes. As noted by Aggrawal (2018) the characteristics of the philosophy of education for the twenty first century includes (i) a new view of knowledge, (ii) a greater integration of knowledge and a renewed commitment to life-long learning. For the realization of those objectives, proper education of teachers is the first requisite. If our nation is to remain in the world markets, then we must dedicate ourselves to the reform, keeping in view the important role of the teacher on the re-orientation and vitalization of education with a view to preparing quality required of education for young people in order to meet the foreseeable demands in the twenty-century.

The quality of education must necessarily depend on the quality of teachers and it is simply not possible to get the right type of teachers in sufficient numbers if they continue to be paid miserably low salaries. Teachers must be seen enjoying the same social status and prestige as all those who eminently serve society, today's or tomorrow's teachers must be a professional, where educational programme and level should be more and more comparable with the physician's education".

Conceptual Framework

Fig 1: Model Showing the Nature of Education in the Development of Knowledge Economy



Knowledge capital is made up of human capital, structural capital and customer capital. Human capital is a composition of great minds with potential brainpower and proprietary skills or talents around which business is built. It has now become a common knowledge that there is a direct positive relationship between knowledge economy index (KEI) and economic growth measured in terms of GDP per capita. This implies that countries with low KEI also have low GDP per capita and vice versa.

A knowledge society comprises of those who live in a knowledge economy, Wikipedia (2009) described a knowledge economy as one that comprises a range of strategies and practices used in an organization to identify, create, present, enable adoption of insights and experiences. In line with the forgoing, Danlman and Albert (2001) asserted that "a key aspect of the knowledge economy is greater investment in education. The key role of teacher education for this initiative is recognized in the implementation strategy, the main point here is that teacher education programmes must fit the environmental, social and economic conditions of the regions and nations (UNESCO, 2005).

Nature and Concept of Teacher Education

Teacher education is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. In other words, teacher education is all formal and informal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibility as a member of the educational profession to discharge his/her responsibility most effectively.

According to Aggarwal (2006) the function of teacher education is to produce good teachers. The good teacher is one who produces good results in meeting central, pressing needs of life in whatever social context. Also, teacher education programmes need to acknowledge that in today's highly interrelated society, everyone's self-interest is best served when the well-being of the whole society is considered (Finn and Finn, 2007). The Finns are of the belief that we can prepare teachers with the attitude that all children can acquire powerful literacy in their collective self-interest. Such collective interest is hinged on people-centred development.

According to Goods Dictionary of Education, teacher education means that formal and non-formal activities and experiences that help to qualify a person to assume responsibilities of a member of the educational profession to discharge his responsibilities more effectively. Teacher education encompasses teaching staffs, sound pedagogical theory and professional skills. However, Aggarwal (2018) submitted that teacher education is that knowledge, skill, and ability which is relevant to the life of a teacher. A course in teacher education should seek to reshape the attitudes, remodel the habits and in a way to reconstitute the personality of a teacher. It is to kindle his initiatives to keep it alive and to save time, money and trouble of the teacher and the taught.

Teacher education is needed for developing a purpose and for formation of a positive attitude for the profession. Consequently there is urgent need for us to recognize that nuclear age problems cannot be solved with horse and buggy learning. The 3R's of our school system must be supported by the 3Ts- teachers who are superior, techniques of instructions that are modern and thinking about education which places it first in all our plans and hopes. The National Council of Teacher Education has conceptualized teacher education as a programme of education, research and training of persons, to teach from pre-primary to higher education level. It is a programme that is related to the development of teacher proficiency and competence that would enable and empower the teacher to meet the requirements of the profession and face the challenges therein. Teacher education is a continuous process and its pre-service and in-service components are complimentary to each other. (Studocu, 2012, Eva & Penelope, 2010).

Teacher education can be considered in three phases; Pre-service, Induction and In-service. The three phases are considered as part of continuous process. Teacher education is based on the theory that "Teachers are made, not born", in contrary to the assumption "teachers are born not made". Since teaching is considered as an art and a science, the teacher has to acquire not only knowledge, but also skills that are called "tricks of the trade".

Concept of Knowledge and Knowledge Economy

Active transition to a knowledge society coincides with the dawn of a new millennium. The essence of this transition is that knowledge and ideas must be seen as resources, raw materials, and other fundamental assets. For the first time in history, knowledge is important, unique, and newsworthy. The essence of knowledge management is that greater emphasis should be placed on people than in technologies (Akinboye, 2003). Knowledge is increasingly becoming more and more recognized as the key driver of productivity and economic growth, given rise to what is now referred to as knowledge-based economy. Knowledge-based economy is an economy powered by knowledge. The society has developed from industrial era when machine replaced manual labour. There is a growing codification knowledge and its transmission through communication and computer networks. Davenport and Prusak (2008) defined knowledge as a fluid of framed experience, contextual information, values, and expert insight that provides a framework for evaluation and incorporating new experiences and information.

Coincidentally, Lucey (2015) perception of knowledge corroborates the concept of knowledge as viewed by Davenport and Prusak (2008). This implies that knowledge emanating from within the individual in form of experience, value, or motivation is applied in decision making. On the other hand, knowledge management refers to the tools and techniques for collecting, managing, and disseminating knowledge/within an organization. Thus knowledge and knowledge management has become a great asset in today's world of work, with knowledge workers operating from anywhere using the computer to carry out business, attend conferences, study in any part of the world.

The concept of knowledge economy was first popularized by Peter Drucker in 1969 in his book "The age of discontinuity". Drucker envisaged a knowledge society where knowledge would be the key resource and knowledge workers would dominate the workforce (Lingenfeller, 2012). Knowledge economy has been conceived differently by various school of thought. It is evident however, that the knowledge economy is everywhere clear. Mba (2011) conceptualise knowledge economy as the economy of knowledge focused on the production and management of knowledge in the frame of economic constraints on one hand, and a knowledge-based economy on the other hand. Mba further described knowledge economy as one where organizations and people acquire, create, disseminate, and use knowledge more effectively for greater economic and social development.

Obanya (2013) described knowledge economy as the production and services based on knowledge-intensive activities that contribute to an accelerated pace of technical and scientific advancement as well as rapid obsolesce, with greater reliance on intellectual capabilities than on physical inputs or natural resources. Obayan (2013) noted that the natural worker works with hand and produces goods and services, but the knowledge worker works with his head and produces ideas, knowledge and information.

Need for Reorientation

Research findings have shown that countries with the most highly educated citizens are also the wealthiest in the world and they are equally the countries dominating the global market in knowledge-based society. Ezekwesili (2013) established that countries like the United States of America, Canada, Japan, Finland, Norway, South Korea, United

Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia. Occupy the second and sixth largest Gross Domestic Product (GDPs) and per capital, and this is attributable to their aggressive investment in education. It is obvious from research findings that the key variable that determines how fast nations outgrow others is the speed of accumulation of human capital. The discussion here takes on the issue of the teacher factor as a fundamental issue in education reform. However a more fundamental issue is the one that deals with the making of teachers. Teaching can be said to have taken place only when the learner has learned something that can transform intellect, emotions, and skills. The world is changing fast and today's changes are propelled by three major phenomenon viz-a-viz Collaboration, ICT, (Information and Communications Technologies revolution, and the knowledge economy.

Globalisation is seen as the process of the world getting smaller. Products, designs, ideas and services now move fast from one point of globe to another. The ICT revolution can be seen and felt everywhere around s. The computer is penetrating all spheres of activity. The internet and the worldwide web are now part of our active vocabulary. Tele-conferencing is gradually becoming a medium of learning and exchange of ideas, as we live in a world of e-Everything (e-learning, e-banking, e-government, etc.). Today's world has also gone virtual, as we begin to operate from virtual offices.

The knowledge economy is yet another revolution in our thinking of what constitutes wealth and power and the skills needed to create and sustain these. What is perhaps most important message here is that natural resources are less important (in considering the wealth of a nation) than human endowments. In the face of global competition, therefore knowledge and skills are a core asset (Obanya, 2013; Okotie, 2019).

This implies that knowledge generation, knowledge transmission, and knowledge application (sharing) will necessarily become the prime preoccupations of institutions and organisations. Faculties of education and colleges are therefore faced with the challenges of how to make their graduates function, relevant and responsive to the requirement of the work force needed to drive the knowledge economy. One of the most prevalent manifestations of these challenges is the high rate of unemployment among graduates of higher institutions. Mba (2012) established that about 50% percent of Nigerian youths are unemployed. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) official report in Mordi (2018) revealed that Nigerian unemployment figure stood at 14.44 million in 2015, rose to 15.9 million in 2016, further rose to 16.74 million in 2017. This phenomenon has persistently raised the question of preparedness of faculties of education and other allied colleges in Nigeria to fit into a knowledge driven economy.

Constraints and Implications Associated with Teacher Preparation in a Knowledge Economy

The emergence of knowledge economy has changed the concept of the labour market and the relationship between employers and employees. The knowledge economy has created the demand for knowledge workers and consequently transformed the demands of the world of work (Obanya, 2013). Therefore it is imperative that teachers who are facilitators, mentors, and educators in the process of knowledge acquisitions must be adequately prepared through continuous professional development. Professional development of teachers involve the pragmatic process of knowledge update with a view to improving the job-related knowledge, skills and attitudes of the educators in order to

make them more adaptable to changing work environment. This necessarily implies that the prosperity of nations depends in their ability to generate and apply innovative ideas. This view is buttressed by Mba (2011), who cited the UNDP Human Development Report, stressed that the real wealth of a nation is its people.

As noted by Okute and Chukwurah (2011), higher education play a vital role in inculcating knowledge and skills as well as developing talents in individuals for the emerging knowledge economy. This implies that teacher preparation and continuous professional development must be given prominence. Therefore, there is greater demand on higher education to pay particular attention not only to the development of such programmes that will equip product with transversal skills, solve problems, and work collaboratively, but also the professional development of teachers to facilitate the acquisition of such knowledge and skills. These skills will prepare the individuals for the various career paths charted by the knowledge economy. Knowledge economy will require high quality labour, therefore higher education should be alert to the needs of the society in terms of high-quality labour, and should vigorously pursue lifelong education which requires people to improve their knowledge. The implication is that Faculties of Education specifically needs to redefine their goals through effective knowledge management to produce intellectually competent graduate teachers.

According to Hargreav (2013) the role of the teacher in the era of knowledge economy could be summarized by two things: to make sure that the student acquires the knowledge which means developing students' abilities to enable him to get involved in different patterns of knowledge. The other one is the necessity to have the teacher as the effect factor in the teaching and learning process, this necessarily implies that the teacher has to develop rapidly the patterns of knowledge that he specialized in and to be qualified for teaching them as well.

Suggestions

Ministry of education must ensure appropriate continuous development of teachers. Teachers must be regularly placed on seminars, conferences, and workshops so as to develop their competencies and to improve their cognitive domain, especially in the area of knowledge creation, preservation, distribution and utilisation.

Greater attention should be paid to research and development in teacher education, while Information Technology (IT) compliance must be mandated. Promote excellence by encouraging and rewarding young innovative and creative graduates of teacher education with potentials, knowledge and skills to invest their wealth of potentials for the transformation of nation's economy.

It is an established fact that only quality education can guarantee knowledge economy, therefore supervisory agencies and stakeholders such as National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Board for Technical Education (NBTE). These bodies should emphasize quality assurance in education by assuring quality inputs and processing and consequently quality outputs. This implies admission of qualified students, recruitment of qualified personnel, availability of functional equipment and instructional materials and others.

Knowledge economy is powered by a pool of intellectuals who can apply knowledge creatively to bring about innovations in the production, distribution and utilisation of resources. In order to catch up with this new development and since education has been adopted as an instrument 'par excellence' for development, more emphasis should be placed on investing more on education through improved funding. This necessarily implies that the government should as a matter of urgency improve budgetary allocation to education to a reasonable standard.

Conclusion

Educational institutions are faced with the challenge of producing graduates who will be intellectually competent and flexible enough to compete favourably in the knowledge economy. Therefore there is a great demand for teachers in educational institutions to be systematically exposed to knowledge and skills, updates through continuous professional development so that they can exert positive influence on students for quality learning. Teachers need to keep pace with the requirements of the twenty-first century, that is the era of knowledge economy. The emergence of knowledge economy has created a new work-place demand for new skills, ability to work with ideas rather than with tools. Knowledge economy requires knowledge workers who can adapt their skills and work elsewhere from anywhere. The ability to rise up to these challenges confers economic power and wealth creation particularly for developing nations.

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